APPLE COMICS

Robert Asprin and Ken & Beth Mitchroney

WARP GRAPHICS

Myth Conceptions

No. 3
$1.75
$2.50 in Canada

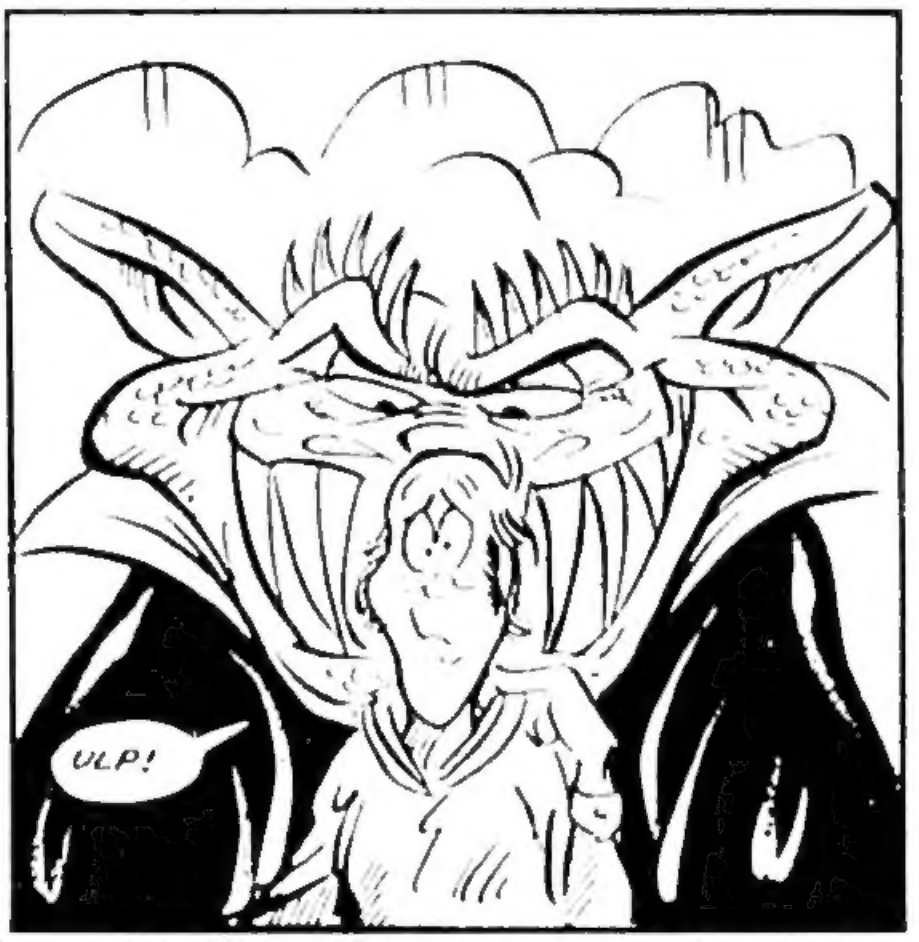
IN BY 9, OUTNUMBERED BY 5!

Our Story So Far. . .

In the dimension of Klah, young Skeeve became apprentice to the wizard Garkin. One day, Garkin transported a fellow magician from the dimension of Perv, the "demon" Aahz, to Klah. As a prank, Garkin put a spell on Aahz that removed his powers. But before Garkin could remove the spell, he was murdered.

As Skeeve was now without a teacher and Aahz was now without his powers (even though he retained all his knowledge of magik), they resolved that Skeeve would become Aahz's apprentice and together they would track down Isstvan, the magician behind Garkin's murder.

Along the way they enlisted the aid of the dull-witted demon hunter, Quigley, and visited Deva, site of an interdimensional bazaar, where they met Tananda, the beautiful assassin/magician. It was also at Deva that Skeeve adopted his pet dragon, Gleep (or was it the other way around?).



After routing Isstvan and bidding their comrades farewell, Aahz and Skeeve took over the maniac magician's former base of operations, an old country inn, to continue Skeeve's education. But Aahz's greed got in the way and after two successive get-rich-quick schemes backfired, they found themselves poorer than ever, with the inn on the verge of bankruptcy.

Things began looking up, however, when Skeeve was summoned to the court of King Rodrick the Fifth of Possiltum to apply for the post of court magician. They decided to stage a role reversal —Aahz would pose as Skeeve's apprentice while he taught Skeeve how to act the part of a powerful sorcerer.

Arriving in Possiltum, Aahz shrewdly gained the favor of King Rodrick's Chancellor, J.R. Grimble, who controlled the purse strings in the kingdom. The strategy paid off when King Rodrick, on the advice of Grimble, gave Skeeve the job. But Skeeve's first assignment called for real magikal skills: stop the invading army approaching from the north — or die trying.

Even worse, General Badaxe, Commander of the Royal Armies of Possiltum (and Grimble's chief rival), told them that he didn't want competition from magicians — he had ordered his troops to make sure that, even if Aahz and Skeeve succeeded, they would never return to Possiltum alive!

Calling All Mythfits!

Want to have even more fun with Aahz, Skeeve, Bob Asprin, and Ken and Beth Mitchroney? Join the Mythadventures Fan Club! You get four quarterly issues of the club newsletter, a membership certificate, button, bumper stickers, the chance to meet other "Mythfits," and more! Just write the words "Mythadventures Fan Club" along with your name, address, and Zip or Postal Code on a piece of paper, enclose a check or money order in U.S. funds (no cash please) for $10.00 ($18.00 outside North America) and mail to: ***Mythadventures Fan Club, PO Box 95, Sutter CA 95982.*** *(Allow 8 weeks for your membership package to arrive.)*

(Please note: the membership dues for the Mythadventures Fan Club were given incorrectly in last issue's ad. The above information is correct.)

Myth Conceptions™

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IN BY 9, OUTNUMBERED BY 5!

LET ME GO! THIS IS SUICIDE!

THERE YOU GO, *OVERREACTING* AGAIN. WE'VE GOT A CHOICE, YOU KNOW!

SURE! WE CAN GET KILLED BY THE INVADERS *OR* KILLED BY BADAXE'S BOYS!

HOW SILLY OF ME NOT TO HAVE *REALIZED* IT!

FOR A MOMENT THERE, I WAS GETTING *WORRIED!*

OUR *CHOICE* IS TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS LAME-BRAINED MISSION...

...*OR* TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN!

boop boop

STORY ADAPTED BY KEN AND BETH MITCHROMEY

ART KEN MITCHROMEY

LETTERING THOMAS SCOTT

CO-INKER HAROLD ANDERSON

EDITOR RICHARD PINI

AAHZ! YOU'RE A GENIUS! LET'S GO BACK TO THE INN -- THE SOONER THE BETTER!

WE AREN'T GOING ANYWHERE UNTIL WE'VE SEEN GRIMBLE ABOUT OUR *PAY!*

THIS JAUNT COST US A *BUNDLE.* WE'RE AT LEAST GOING TO BREAK *EVEN!*

BESIDES, THERE ARE *ISSUES* HERE!

THERE YOU ARE, GENTLEMEN!

YIKES!

I TRUST THE GENERAL SUPPLIED YOU WITH THE NECESSARY INFORMATION FOR YOUR MISSION.

I HAVE EVERY CONFIDENCE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH THE *RIFF RAFF* FROM THE NORTH.

I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW YOU WERE MY *PERSONAL CHOICE--*

IN FACT, I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SENDING YOU THE INVITATION!

LORD CHANCELLOR, HOW DID YOU HEAR OF US IN THE *FIRST PLACE?*

ACTUALLY, IT WAS A WENCH, RATHER *COMELY,* BUT I DON'T RECALL HER NAME OFFHAND!

SHE MAY HAVE DYED HER HAIR SINCE YOU MET HER.

IT WAS GREEN AT THE TIME WE--*ER*--MET.

TANDA!

ABOUT OUR WAGES...

YOU MUST REALIZE WE ARE A *HUMBLE KINGDOM.*

THERE HAVE BEEN QUARTERS SET ASIDE FOR YOU...

...YOUR MEALS WILL BE PROVIDED...

...ASSUMING YOU ARE ON TIME WHEN THEY ARE SERVED...

...AND I'D SAY A CERTAINTY HIS MAJESTY WILL INCLUDE FREE STABLE SPACE AND FOOD FOR YOUR UNICORNS.

WHAT YOU'VE OFFERED IS A ROOM WE **WON'T** BE SLEEPING IN--

--MEALS WE WON'T BE EATING--

--AND STABLE SPACE WE WON'T BE USING BECAUSE WE'LL BE IN THE FIELD FIGHTING FOR YOU!

IN EXCHANGE, YOU WANT SKEEVE TO USE HIS SKILLS TO SAVE YOUR KINGDOM...

BY MY CALCULATIONS, THAT'S CHEAP!

WELL, THERE WILL, OF COURSE, BE A SMALL *WAGE* PAID.

HOW SMALL?

PHIL WAZ HERE!

SUFFICIENT TO COVER EXPENSES-- *50* GOLD PIECES A MONTH!

TWO HUNDRED.

WE'LL COME DOWN TO 225.

ACTUALLY, I MISSPOKE-- I MEANT 250.

PERHAPS AS HIGH AS 75.

CONSIDERING HIS SKILLS, WE COULD PAY--

--DID YOU SAY 225?

NOW SEE HERE!

LOOK, YOU HAD THREE CHOICES!

YOU COULD DOUBLE THE SIZE OF YOUR ARMY--

--HIRE A MAGICIAN--

--OR LOSE THE KINGDOM!

EVEN AT 300 A MONTH, SKEEVE IS YOUR BEST DEAL!

VERY WELL, 250 IT IS!

300, PAYABLE IN ADVANCE!

THREE HUNDRED. PAYABLE AT THE END OF THE PAY PERIOD!

ON THAT POINT I MUST REMAIN INFLEXIBLE. EVERYONE IN THE ROYAL RETINUE IS PAID AT THE SAME TIME!

WHAT ABOUT AN ADVANCE FOR BRIBES?

EVEN MAGIK IS AIDED BY ACCURATE INFORMATION...

...A LITTLE ADVANCE WARNING CAN GO A LONG WAY IN ANY BATTLE!

I WILL REQUIRE AN ACCOUNTING OF THOSE FUNDS AFTER YOUR VICTORY!

TRUE ENOUGH. I GUESS WE CAN GIVE YOU AN ALLOWANCE, ASSUMING IT WILL BE WITHIN REASON, SAY, FIVE GOLD PIECES.

TWENTY-FIVE WOULD--

FIVE!

CHIMKA TINKA

YOU SEEM VERY CONFIDENT OF OUR VICTORY, LORD CHANCELLOR!

OF COURSE I AM CONFIDENT, LORD MAGICIAN!

I HAVE STAKED MY KINGDOM, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, MY REPUTATION ON YOUR SUCCESS!

I RATE MY REPUTATION ABOVE THE KINGDOM. KINGDOMS RISE AND FALL, BUT A CHANCELLOR CAN ALWAYS FIND EMPLOYMENT--

--PROVIDING IT WAS NOT HIS ADVICE WHICH BROUGHT THE KINGDOM TO RUIN!

SHOULD YOU FAIL TO SAVE POSSILTUM, MY CAREER IS FINISHED!

IF THAT SHOULD HAPPEN, YOUR CAREER FALLS WITH MINE!

THAT HAS THE SOUND OF A *THREAT* TO IT, GRIMBLE.

DOES IT?

I AM NOT THREATENING--- I'M STATING A *FACT.*

I MAINTAIN VERY CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE CHANCELLORS OF ALL SURROUNDING KINGDOMS...

...THEY KNOW MY POSITION IN THIS *MAGIK VS. MILITARY* ISSUE.

SHOULD YOU PROVE ME *WRONG, YOU,* SKEEVE, WILL BE DENOUNCED AS A *FRAUD* AND *CHARLATAN.*

IN FACT, AS THE CHANCELLORS FREQUENTLY *CONTROL* THE COURTS...

...I WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF THEY FOUND AN EXCUSE TO HAVE YOU PUT TO DEATH AS A *FAVOR* TO ME!

I TRUST YOU'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND AS YOU PLAN YOUR CAMPAIGN!

WELL, DO YOU HAVE ANY *SOUND ADVICE* ON OUR SITUATION?

NOW THAT WE'VE GOT THE *WHOLE STORY...*

YOU CAN *PANIC!*

THAT AFTERNOON...

SHOULD YOU EMERGE VICTORIOUS FROM THE IMPENDING BATTLE, YOU WILL NOT LIVE TO COLLECT YOUR REWARD!

DO I *MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?*

SHOULD YOU *FAIL* IN YOUR CAMPAIGN, I AM FINISHED, AND YOU FALL *WITH* ME, SKEEVE!

AND ALL OTHER MAGICIANS WILL BE *DENOUNCED* AS *FRAUDS!*

Well kid, it could be *WORSE!*

LOOK, AAHZ, *YOU* GOT ME INTO THIS THING!

YOU HELPED ME GET THE JOB OF *COURT MAGICIAN* FOR THE KING OF POSSILTUM!

WE HAVE TO FIGHT AN ARMY MARCHING IN A LINE *LONGER* THAN THIS COUNTRY'S *BORDER!*

AND ALL YOU CAN DO IS *MAKE JOKES!*

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO!?

'AY! YOU TWO!

I GOOT A *SPESHUL MESSIGE* FROM THE *KING* 'EAR FOW YOU!

LET'S SEE...

...WE MAY AS WELL SEE WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST--

--"KNOW YOUR ENEMY," THEY SAY.

LET'S HEAD NORTH AND TAKE A *LOOK* AT THESE GUYS!

PACK ONLY WHAT YOU CAN *CARRY.*

WE'LL MOVE FASTER--AND MORE *QUIETLY*-- THAT WAY!

POSSILTUM STABLES

We clean stables till the day is dung!

WHAT!?

POSSILTUM STABLES

MANURE 'TIS THE MERRIER

WHERE DOES IT SAY THE UNICORN HAS TO STAY?

'EAR!

AND YOU CAN'T LEAVE THE DRAGON AT THE PALACE UNLESS ONE OF YEH STAYS 'EAR TO 'ANDLE 'IM!

COME ON, KID!

AND KEEP AN EYE ON THAT STUPID DRAGON!

YOU ARE NOW LEAVING SCENIC POSSILTUM

THE KINGDOM BEAUTIFUL

SPEED CHECKED BY RADAR

K KIWANIS

A M.A.F.C. COMMUNITY

DOWN THE ROAD A BIT...

AAHZ! THEY ACT LIKE THEY DON'T EVEN SEE US!

I THINK THEY'RE WORRIED ABOUT SOMETHING BIGGER THAN A PERVECT, A KID, AND A GOOFY DRAGON!

I THINK THEY'RE RUNNING FROM THE ARMY.

SPACE ACE

COMICS

8

I'LL SHOW YOU...

...HOLD, STRANGER!

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

WOMP

TO THE CAPITOL!

NOW PLEASE, UH, HA--

YIII!

T-T-T-TO BE AS NEAR AS POSSIBLE TO THE KING...

...WHEN HE MAKES HIS STAND AGAINST THE INVADERS FROM THE NORTH -- HE'LL TRY TO SAVE *HIMSELF* EVEN IF HE WON'T DEFEND THE OUTLANDS!

CITIZEN! YOU NEED *FLEE* NO MORE! YOU HAVE UNDERESTIMATED YOUR KING'S CONCERN FOR YOUR SAFETY! YOU SEE BEFORE YOU THE NEW COURT *MAGICIAN*...

...RETAINED BY HIS MAJESTY SPECIALLY FOR DEFENDING POSSILTUM FROM THE INVADING ARMY!

WHAT SAY YOU TO *THAT?*

ONE MAGICIAN?

WITH MY OWN ABLE *ASSISTANCE,* OF COURSE

I'D *SAY* YOU WERE *CRAZY!*

NOW *LOOK*--

SLURP SLURP

NO YOU LOOK!.. ..WHOEVER OR WHATEVER YOU ARE! MEANING NO DISRESPECT TO THIS OR ANY MAGICIAN, YOU'RE FOOLS TO OPPOSE THAT ARMY! MAGICK MAY BE WELL AND GOOD AGAINST AN ORDINARY FORCE, BUT YOU AREN'T GOING TO STOP THAT ARMY WITH ONE MAGICIAN!

--OR TWENTY MAGICIANS, FOR THAT MATTER!!

WE HAVE EVERY CONFIDENCE--

FINE!

THEN YOU GO NORTH! ME, I'M HEADING FOR THE CAPITOL!

BIFF

GLEEP?

JEEZ! COME ON, KID!

...THINK WE'VE GONE FAR ENOUGH, TODAY, KID.

I SUGGEST WE SET UP CAMP FOR THE NIGHT.

AAHZ, CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING?

SURE, KID GO AHEAD.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO YOUR PLAN TO TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN?

BIG DEAL! FIVE *WHOLE* GOLD PIECES!

SO IT'S SMALL-- BUT SO WAS THE EFFORT WE PUT INTO IT.

CONSIDERING THAT WE DIDN'T SPEND ANYTHING--

TOK!

WHAT ABOUT THE UNICORN?

WHILE THEY'RE STILL HOLDING THE UNICORN, WE'VE LOST MONEY ON THE DEAL!

AAHZ, BUTTERCUP DIDN'T COST US ANYTHING, REMEMBER?

HE WAS A GIFT FROM QUIGLEY.

AAHZ! HOLD IT!

ALL RIGHT, DUMPSTER BREATH, WHERE'S MY DINNER?

HERE AAHZ, TAKE PART OF MY SANDWICH.

NOW, WHAT WERE YOU SAYING ABOUT BUTTERCUP?

IT WOULD COST MONEY TO REPLACE HIM. THAT MEANS THAT WE LOSE MONEY ON THE DEAL UNLESS WE GET HIM BACK!

AAHZ, WHY DO YOU *REALLY* WANT TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS?

PANT. PANT. PANT. PANT. PANT. PANT.

WEREN'T YOU LISTENING, KID ? I SAID--

I KNOW, I KNOW. YOU SAID IT WAS FOR PROFIT.

THE ONLY THING WRONG WITH THAT IS YOU TRIED TO LEAVE *GLEEP* BEHIND, WHO COST US MONEY, INSTEAD OF *BUTTERCUP*, WHO DIDN'T COST US ANYTHING! THAT DOESN'T RING TRUE IF YOU'RE TRYING TO SHOW A PROFIT WITH THE LEAST POSSIBLE EFFORT!

UMM, YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT THAT STUPID DRAGON...

AND YOU KNOW HOW *I* FEEL ABOUT HIM. AS SUCH, YOU ALSO KNOW I'D *NEVER* ABANDON HIM TO TO SAVE MY OWN SKIN, MUCH LESS *MONEY!* FOR SOME REASON, YOU WANTED TO BE SURE I'D SEE THIS THING THROUGH-- AND THAT REASON HAS NOTHING AT ALL TO DO WITH MONEY...

NOW, WHAT IS IT?

THE *REASON*, AAHZ.

CHOMP

THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS, KID. THE MAIN ONE IS THAT YOU'RE NOT A MASTER MAGICIAN YET!

THAT DOESN'T MAKE A WHOLE LOT OF SENSE.

IF I'M SHORT ON *ABILITY*, WHY ARE YOU SO EAGER TO SHOVE ME INTO THIS MISSION?

HEAR ME OUT, KID!

I MADE A *MISTAKE*, AND THAT MISTAKE HAS DUMPED US INTO A SITUATION THAT NEEDS A *MASTER MAGICIAN*. MORE THAN A MASTER MAGICIAN'S *ABILITIES*, WE NEED A MASTER MAGICIAN'S *CONSCIENCE!*

DO YOU FOLLOW ME?

NO.

NOT SURPRISING. THAT'S WHY I TRIED TO TRICK YOU INTO COMPLETING THIS MISSION INSTEAD OF EXPLAINING IT!

SO FAR, ALL YOUR TRAINING HAS BEEN ON PHYSICAL ABILITIES WITHOUT DEVELOPING YOUR PROFESSIONAL CONSCIENCE!

YOU'VE TAUGHT ME TO KEEP ONE EYE ON *PROFITS!*

THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN, KID!

LOOK, FOR A MINUTE, *FORGET* ABOUT *PROFITS!*

"FORGET ABOUT PROFITS!?"

ARE YOU FEELING OKAY, AAHZ? YOU DON'T SOUND LIKE YOURSELF AT ALL!

WILL YOU GET OFF MY BACK, KID!?!

I'M TRYING TO EXPLAIN SOMETHING IMPORTANT!!

WHEN YOU APPRENTICED TO GARKIN, AND EVEN WHEN YOU FIRST MET ME, YOU DIDN'T *WANT* TO BE A MAGICIAN! YOU WANTED TO BE A *THIEF!*

TO FOCUS YOUR ENERGIES BEHIND YOUR LESSONS, I HAD TO STRESS HOW MUCH *BENEFIT* YOU COULD REAP FROM LEARNING MAGIK!

WELL, THERE'S *ANOTHER SIDE* TO MAGIK! THERE'S A *RESPONSIBILITY*-- A RESPONSIBILITY TO YOUR FELLOW PRACTITIONERS, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, TO *MAGIK* ITSELF!

EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE RIVALS-- AND WILL PROBABLY ACQUIRE *MORE* IF WE LIVE THAT LONG--

-- AND EVEN THOUGH WE MAY FIGHT WITH THEM OR BEAT THEM OUT FOR A JOB, WE ARE ALL BOUND BY A *COMMON CAUSE!*

EVERY MAGICIAN HAS A *DUTY* TO *PROMOTE* MAGIK, TO SEE THAT IT'S USE IS RESPECTED AND REPUTABLE.

MOM

PERVBAM

AND APPLECORE PIE!

MAGICIAN'S UNIO LOCAL 321

COME ON IN AND SET A SPELL!

THE GREATER THE *MAGICIAN*, THE GREATER HIS SENSE OF *DUTY!*

FLINK

:SNIFF: KINDA GETS YA RIGHT HERE, DON'T IT, KID? :SNIFF:

WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH OUR CURRENT SITUATION?

THERE'S AN *ISSUE* AT STAKE HERE, KID!

YOU HEARD IT FROM BADAXE AND GRIMBLE BOTH.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, YOU HEARD IT FROM THE *POPULACE* WHEN WE TALKED TO THE PEASANTS. RODRICK IS GAMBLING HIS ENTIRE *KINGDOM* ON THE ABILITY OF MAGIK TO DO A JOB!

NOW, NO ONE BUT A MAGICIAN CAN TELL HOW *REASONABLE* OR *UNREASONABLE* A TASK THAT MIGHT BE... IF WE *FAIL*, ALL THE LAYMEN WILL SEE IS THAT *MAGIK* FAILED, AND THEY'LL NEVER TRUST IT AGAIN!

THAT'S WHY WE CAN'T WALK AWAY FROM THIS MISSION! WE'RE HERE REPRESENTING *MAGIK*-- AND WE'VE GOT TO GIVE IT OUR *BEST SHOT!*

BUT WHAT CAN WE DO AGAINST A *WHOLE ARMY?*

?

TO BE HONEST WITH YOU, I DON'T REALLY KNOW.

I'M HOPING WE CAN COME UP WITH AN IDEA AFTER WE'VE SEEN EXACTLY WHAT IT IS WE'RE UP AGAINST!

AFTER A FEW DAYS' SCOUTING...

THE ONLY THING DULLER THAN BEING A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE IS SPENDING DAYS ON END *WATCHING* SOLDIERS OF THE EMPIRE!

ZZZZZ

YOU'RE RIGHT, KID. BEING A SOLDIER *IS* PRETTY DULL WORK.

HOW ABOUT *US?*

WHAT WE'RE DOING ISN'T EXACTLY EXCITING, YOU KNOW!

YOU WANT *EXCITEMENT?*

TELL YOU WHAT. WHY DON'T YOU JUST *STROLL* DOWN THERE AND ASK THE OFFICER OF THE DAY FOR A QUICK RUN-DOWN ON HOW THEIR ARMY *OPERATES!*

I BET THAT'LL *LIVEN* THINGS UP FOR YOU!

I'M NOT *THAT* BORED!

ZZZZZZZZZ

THEN WHAT SAY YOU JUST KEEP QUIET AND LET ME DO THIS *MY* WAY?

DO *WHAT* YOUR WAY?

EXACTLY WHAT IS IT WE'RE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH, ANYWAY?

WE'RE *SCOUTING* THE *ENEMY!*

WE'VE GOT ENOUGH GOING AGAINST US ON THIS CAMPAIGN WITHOUT RUSHING IN *UNINFORMED!*

SNERT

HOW MUCH INFORMATION DO WE *NEED?*

THIS ENCAMPMENT DOESN'T LOOK ANY DIFFERENT THAN THE LAST *FIVE* WE LOOKED AT!

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.

WHAT HAVE *YOU* LEARNED SO FAR ABOUT THE OPPOSITION?

UMMM... THERE ARE A LOT OF THEM...

...THEY'RE WELL ARMED...

...UMM...

...AND THEY HAVE CATAPULTS...

IS THAT *ALL?*

BRILLIANT!

YOU AND BADAXE MAKE A GREAT TEAM OF TACTICIANS!

OKAY, SO *TEACH* ME!

WHAT HAVE *YOU* LEARNED?

YOU CAN SPEND *YEARS* TRYING TO LEARN MILITARY THEORY WITHOUT SCRATCHING THE SURFACE.

BUT I'LL TRY TO GIVE YOU THE IMPORTANT PARTS IN A NUTSHELL...

...TO APPRAISE A FORCE, SUCH AS WE ARE DOING NOW, REMEMBER TWO WORDS: *SAM* AND *DOC.*

SAM? AND DOC?

SAM-DOC

SOME FOLKS PREFER TO REMEMBER "SALUTE", BUT I LIKE "SAM" AND "DOC".

THEY'RE INITIALS TO REMEMBER. AN INFORMATION CHECKLIST.

"SALUTE" STANDS FOR *SIZE, ACTIVITY, LOCATION, UNIT, TIME* AND *EQUIPMENT*. THAT'S FINE AS FAR AS IT GOES, BUT IT ASSUMES NO JUDGMENTAL ABILITY ON THE PART OF THE SCOUT.

SCRATCH SCRATCH

?

I PREFER "SAM" AND "DOC"

THAT STANDS FOR *STRENGTH, ARMAMENT, MOVEMENT* AND *DEPLOYMENT, ORGANIZATION,* AND *COMMUNICATION.*

OH.

NOW, USING THAT FRAMEWORK LET'S SUMMARIZE WHAT WE'VE SEEN SO FAR...

...SIZE: THERE ARE LOTS OF THEM, ENOUGH SO IT'S KIND OF POINTLESS TO TRY FOR AN EXACT COUNT.

MOVEMENT: CURRENTLY, THEY'RE JUST SITTING THERE.

I GOT *THAT* FAR ALL BY MYSELF!

THE *BIG KEY*, HOWEVER, IS IN THEIR *ARMAMENT* AND *EQUIPMENT*. WHEN YOU LOOK AT THIS, CONSIDER BOTH WHAT *IS* THERE AND WHAT *ISN'T!*

TWIST

HOW'S THAT AGAIN?

WHAT'S THERE IS A LOT OF FOOT SCHLOGGERS, INFANTRY, A LITTLE ARTILLERY IN THE FORM OF CATAPULTS AND ARCHERS, BUT NOTHING EVEN VAGUELY RESEMBLING CAVALRY!

THAT MEANS THEY'RE GOING SLOW WHEN THEY MOVE, PARTICULARLY IN BATTLE. WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ANY FAST FLANKING MOVES. IT'LL BE A TOE-TO-TOE SLUGFEST!

BUT, AAHZ...

AS TO THE DEPLOYMENT AND ORGANIZATION, THEY'RE STRUNG OUT ALL OVER THE PLACE, PROBABLY BECAUSE IT'S EASIER TO FORAGE FOR FOOD THAT WAY. THEN AGAIN, IT DISPLAYS A CERTAIN CONFIDENCE ON THEIR PART THAT THEY DON'T FEEL IT'S NECESSARY TO MASS THEIR FORCES. I THINK WE'RE *LOOKING* AT THEIR *ORGANIZATION*, A COLLECTION OF COMPANIES, OR BATTALIONS, EACH UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF TWO OR THREE OFFICERS, ALL UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF A SUPER- LEADER OR GEN- ERAL.

AAHZ...

COMMUNICATION SEEMS TO BE THEIR MOST VULNERABLE POINT! IF AN ARMY THIS SIZE DOESN'T COORDINATE ITS MOVEMENTS, IT'S IN BIG TROUBLE! IF THEY'RE REALLY *USING* SIGNAL TOWERS AND RUNNERS TO PASS MESSAGES, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO JINX THE WORKS FOR THEM!

AAHZ!

HMM?

OH, THAT'S A CAPSULE SUMMARY OF WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST!

I KNOW, I KNOW!

BUT FOR DAYS YOU'VE BEEN SAYING YOU'LL FORMULATE A PLAN AFTER YOU'VE SEEN WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST!

WELL, YOU'VE SEEN IT!

WHAT'S THE PLAN? HOW CAN WE BEAT THEM?

THERE'S NO WAY, KID.

IF I HAD SEEN ONE, I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU. BUT I HAVEN'T --AND THAT'S WHY I KEEP LOOKING.

MAYBE THERE ISN'T ONE.

I'M STARTING TO THINK YOU'RE RIGHT. IF SO, THAT MEANS WE'LL HAVE TO DO SOMETHING I REALLY DON'T WANT TO DO!

PLOINK!

YOU MEAN, *GIVE UP?*

AFTER THAT *BIG SPEECH* YOU GAVE ME ABOUT *RESPONSIBILITY* AND--

WHOA!

I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT GIVING UP! WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO IS--

GLEEP!

KID! WILL YOU KEEP *QUIET!*

ALL WE NEED NOW IS TO PULL THE ARMY DOWN OUR NECKS!

RIGHT, AAHZ!

LATER, OUTSIDE CAMP...

?

PAM

THUMPA THUMPA THUMPA

PANT PANT PANT PANT PANT

GLEEP!

TWANG

WHAT IS IT, GLEEP? YOU SEE SOMETHING, BOY?

SNIFF SNIFF

BOY, I HOPE IT'S NOT A *SCOUT!* IF IT IS, WE'RE *DONE FOR!*

SURPRISE!!

KLANK

WOOOOSH!!

KINDA JUMPY, AREN'T YOU, HANDSOME?

TANDA!!

DO YOU MIND COMING DOWN? I CAN'T COME UP!

GEE, TANDA, I--

GEE, IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, HANDSOME! HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?

SMACK!

I WAS FINE.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

I'M WAITING FOR YOU, SILLY! WHERE'S AAHZ?

GLEEP

GLEEP!

GLEEP!

HE'S-- SAY, HOW DID YOU KNOW I HAD AAHZ WITH ME ?

DON'T GET MAD! IT STANDS TO REASON. EVEN AAHZ WOULDN'T LET YOU FACE *THAT* ARMY ALONE!

GLEEP!

GLEEP!

GLEEP!

GLEEP!!

GLEEP! HOW'RE YA DOIN', FELLA ?

GLEEP!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT DRAGON?

AAHZ!!

BOOOMP!!

STILL IMPULSIVE, AREN'T YOU! AT LEAST I DON'T HAVE TO ASK IF YOU'RE GLAD TO SEE ME!

TANDA!!

CCC CCC

YOU REMEMBERED!

THAT'S RIGHT!

GRIMBLE SAID YOU SET US UP FOR THIS JOB!

I CAN EXPLAIN THAT!

WE CAN HARDLY WAIT!

UMM... THIS COULD TAKE A WHILE GUYS. GOT ANYTHING TO DRINK?

GLEEP!

IF THIS STORY'S LONG, WE'D BETTER STAY CLOSE TO GLEEP SO HE'LL STAY QUIET!

CLAMP

GLEEB-!

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER YOU LEFT?

WHERE ARE *ISSTVAN* AND *BROCKHURST* AND *HIGGINS*?

DID THEY EVER BRING *FRUMPLE* BACK TO LIFE, OR IS HE STILL A STATUE?

WHEN DID YOU CHANGE YOUR HAIR?

LATER, KID! FIRST THINGS FIRST! YOU WERE ABOUT TO EXPLAIN ABOUT *GRIMBLE!*

GRIMBLE! DID YOU EVER NOTICE THE "CROOKEDER" A PERSON IS, THE MORE POSSESSIVE HE IS? HE'S THE MAIN REASON I DIDN'T WAIT FOR YOU AT POSSILTUM!

FROM THE BEGINNING...

FROM THE BEGINNING.

WELL, I PICKED HIM AT A SINGLES BAR. HE'S *MARRIED*... I DIDN'T KNOW THAT 'TIL LATER.

WHAT'S A *SINGLES BAR?*

SHUT UP, KID!

WELL IT WASN'T ACTUALLY A *SINGLES BAR.* IT WAS MORE OF A *TAVERN.*

I SHOULD HAVE *KNOWN* HE WAS MARRIED. I MEAN, NOBODY THAT YOUNG IS *THAT* BALD UNLESS HE'S GOT A WIFE A HOME!

WELL, ONE OF THE THINGS GRIMBLE MENTIONED WHILE HE WAS TRYING TO *IMPRESS* ME WITH HOW IMPORTANT HIS JOB WAS, WAS THAT HE WAG TRYING TO FIND A COURT MAGICIAN!

HE SAID HE HAD CONVINCED THE KING TO HIRE ONE, BUT NOW HE COULDN'T *FIND* ONE AND WAS GOING TO END UP LOOKING LIKE AN IDIOT!

SLAP!

AND WHEN HE MENTIONED *IDIOTS,* NATURALLY, YOU THOUGHT OF *US!*

NOW DON'T BE THAT WAY!

I THOUGHT IT WAS A GOOD WAY TO HELP OUT A COUPLE OF FRIENDS. I KNEW YOU TWO WERE HANGING OUT IN THIS NECK OF THE WOODS AND EVERYBODY KNOWS WHAT *CUSHY* JOB BEING A COURT MAGICIAN IS!

WHAT DID I *TELL* YOU, KID?

WE MUST BE TALKING ABOUT DIFFERENT JOBS!

HEY, WHEN I GAVE HIM YOUR NAMES, I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE INVADING ARMY!

HONEST!

AS SOON AS I FOUND OUT WHAT THE REAL STORY WAS, I KNEW I HAD GOTTEN YOU INTO A *TIGHT SPOT*. I WOULD HAVE WAITED AT POSSILTUM, BUT I WAS AFRAID WHAT WITH YOUR DISGUISES YOU'D RECOGNIZE ME BEFORE I SPOTTED YOU!

IF YOU GAVE ME THE KIND OF GREETING I'VE GROWN TO *EXPECT*, IT COULD HAVE FOULED UP THE DEAL! GRIMBLE'S A JEALOUS *TWIT*, AND IF HE THOUGHT WE WERE MORE THAN NODDING ACQUAINTANCES, HE WOULD HAVE HELD BACK WHATEVER SUPPORT HE MIGHT NORMALLY GIVE!

BIG DEAL! FIVE WHOLE GOLD PIECES!

AAHZ ALWAYS GETS US THE BEST POSSIBLE DEAL! AT LEAST *MONETARILY*.

THAT MUCH? WHICH ARM DID YOU BREAK?

WELL, AT LEAST I WON'T DIG INTO YOUR WAR FUNDS. WHEN I FOUND OUT THE MESS I HAD GOTTEN YOU INTO, I DECIDED I'D WORK THIS ONE FOR FREE. SINCE I GOT YOU INTO IT, THE LEAST I CAN DO IS HELP GET YOU OUT!

AAHZ, HAVE YOU GOT A *PLAN?*

NOW I DO!

AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ROUGH TO DO IT WITHOUT *YOU!*

THIS JOB'S TOO BIG FOR ONE-- OR FOR *THREE*, FOR THAT MATTER!

FOR ONCE, YOU'RE *RIGHT*, KID! WE NEED MORE HELP. WE NEED AN *ARMY* OF OUR *OWN!*

WE'RE SUPPOSED TO WIN THIS WAR WITH *MAGIK*, AREN'T WE? WITH TANDA ON OUR TEAM, WE'VE GOT A COUPLE OF *EXTRA SKILLS* TO DRAW ON!

YOU MEAN-- LIKE *TRAVELING THROUGH THE DIMENSIONS?*

THAT'S RIGHT KID!

WE'RE GOING BACK TO *DEVA!*

WE'RE GOING TO RECRUIT A LITTLE *INVASIONARY FORCE* OF OUR OWN!

NEXT ISSUE: TOO MANY KOOKS SPOIL THE BRAWL!